



# 2021

## CORPORATION COUNSEL ANNUAL REPORT

J. Blair Ward, Corporation Counsel  
Yelena Zarwell, Assistant Corporation Counsel  
Whitney DeVoe, Assistant Corporation Counsel  
Sarana Stolar, Paralegal II/County Board Reporter  
Tom Antholine, Assistant Corporation Counsel (Child Support)  
Kendall Wick, Assistant Corporation Counsel (Child Support)

The Corporation Counsel is the chief legal advisor to the County Board, the County Administrator and all County Board committees, commissions, boards, department heads and staff.

### **Responsibilities of the Corporation Counsel Office**

- Attend all meetings of the County Board of Supervisors and provide legal advice and opinions to the County Board and County Board Committees
- Draft resolutions and ordinances with executive summaries to be acted on by the County Board as requested by County Board Committees and the County Administrator
- Issue legal opinions and advice to elected officials, the County Administrator, department heads and staff
- Prepare and arrange publication of County Board minutes and annual minute books
- Serve as Assistant County Administrator in the County Administrator's absence
- Represent interests of the public in mental health commitments, children in need of protection and services (CHIPS) proceedings; file petitions for guardianships of children and adults and petitions for protective placements on behalf of the Human Services Department
- Provide legal representation to the Child Support office on matters such as establishing paternity and establishing and enforcing child support and medical support obligations
- Serve as Public Information Officer and provide legal representation in the emergency operations center during emergencies
- Prepare bid requirements and requests for proposals for publication in the County's official newspaper and County website
- Provide guidance to the Planning and Zoning Committee and Board of Adjustment on issuing conditional use permits and variances

### **2021 Office Summary**

- Prosecuted mental health commitments, guardianships, protective placements, Children in Need of Protection and Services (CHIPS) on behalf of the Human Services Department (year of 2020):
  - Mental Health Commitments - 132 (increase of 6 from 2020)
  - Mental Health Commitment Extensions - 45 (decrease of 15 from 2020)
  - Mental Health Commitment Appeals – 0 (decrease of 2 from 2020)
  - Return to Inpatient Facility - 37 (decrease of 2 from 2020)
  - Guardianships and Ch 55 Protective Placements - 46 (increase of 6 from 2020)
  - Annual Reviews of Protective Placement - 19 (increase of 5 from 2020)

- Children in Need of Protection and Services (CHIPS) Filings - 52 (increase of 14 from 2020)
- Temporary Physical Custody (TPC) – 32 (increase of 6 from 2020)
- Juvenile (CHIPS) Guardianship filing – 11 (decrease of 10 from 2020)
- Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) – 6 (increase of 6 from 2020)
- Represented Jefferson County Human Services in contested administrative appeal hearings involving child abuse and neglect substantiation cases
- Provided legal reviews on multiple service provider contracts for the Human Services Department such as contracts for inpatient and outpatient mental health services
- Supervised outside legal counsel retained by the County's insurance company to defend the County against claims
- Represented the Planning and Zoning Department in the enforcement of zoning ordinances through enforcement letters and lawsuits against property owners
- Filed Petition foreclosing on tax delinquent properties resulting in the County taking title to 6 properties
- Drafted contracts for public works projects and other purchases required for County operations
- Provided legal advice to the Health Department and appeared at Board of Health meetings to address public health concerns from members of the public
- Provided legal counsel to the County Administrator and Human Resources Department for conducting employee investigations, addressing employee discipline and other personnel matters
- Provided legal counsel to the Sheriff and Law Enforcement Committee in resolving employee disciplinary matters and drafting memorandums of understanding for changes to the union collective bargaining agreement
- Drafted various County ordinances and amendments to existing ordinances
- Drafted enforcement letters and provided legal counsel on health code/ordinance violations
- Provided legal representation to the Child Support office at court hearings for the establishment of paternity and the establishment, modification and enforcement of child support orders
- Participated as a member of the Jefferson County Judicial Engagement Team to review and evaluate the current juvenile justice and child protective services procedures
- Attended Wisconsin Association of County Corporation Counsels and Wisconsin Counties Association sponsored events for professional development
- Provided legal advice to County Departments in responding to public records requests
- Reviewed and approved multiple contracts for the Fair Park in preparation for the annual County Fair including marketing partnership agreements and contracts for Fair entertainment.